

COMMUNITY PLANNING & INVESTMENT PROGRAM
FY 2003-04
REGIONAL CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The Regional Challenge Grant Program provides non-competitive grants to support promising regional initiatives designed to establish new mechanisms for managing governmental affairs more efficiently and economically, and integrating transportation, economic development, natural resource protection, and land use management more effectively, consistent with smart growth principles. SPO is seeking to provide critical interim support for promising initiatives that have germinated to a point where the infusion of modest resources can provide an opportunity for regional stakeholders to fully consider and implement new approaches. Preference will be given to projects that are clearly linked to strategies in comprehensive plans that the Office has found to be consistent with the Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (the Act) and/or that are called for in officially adopted regional policy documents such as Regional Transportation Advisory Committee Regional Advisory Reports, Comprehensive Transportation Study Region Reports and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies. **Qualified applicants are encouraged to apply, with the understanding that the ability to award grants is contingent on the availability of funds.**

We hope to have approximately \$60,000 for Regional Challenge Grants. **These grants are not competitive, nor is there a deadline for receipt of applications.** Up to \$15,000 may be requested. Funds are available as of March 1, 2003. SPO will consider proposals from qualified applicants on an ongoing basis, including into FY04, if funding is available. Applications will be reviewed as they are received until funds are expended.

The applicant and associated project partners must provide a 100% cash match of the amount requested of SPO. For applicants that do not have a 100% match in-hand at the time of application, SPO may consider a proposal for a staged schedule to fulfill the match requirement to allow a reasonable amount of time. In such case, full awards will be contingent on meeting the staged requirements and/or successful delivery of interim products.

Funds leveraged from other sources beyond the direct project partners are not required, but may improve the chance of being funded.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Eligible activities might include, but are not limited to:

- ♦ Development of inter-municipal agreements, county initiatives or other institutional mechanisms that will achieve governmental efficiencies;
- ♦ Development of regional land use management¹ mechanisms involving at least 3 municipalities;

¹ Land use management includes planning, regulation, investment and other strategies.

- ◆ Development of regional capital investment plans involving at least 3 municipalities;
- ◆ Development of integrated housing, land use, transportation and/or economic development pilot projects involving at least 2 municipalities and the private sector;
- ◆ Development of tax base sharing arrangements involving at least 2 municipalities; and
- ◆ Development of regional governmental mechanisms for managing natural resource systems.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Qualified applicants must be one of the following:

- ◆ Unit of government. If an applicant is a multi-municipal group, at least one of the municipalities must have an adopted comprehensive plan that has been determined to be consistent with the Act. If an applicant is a county, a municipality with an adopted comprehensive plan that has been determined to be consistent with the Act must be actively engaged in the project;
- ◆ Unit of government partnered with a non-profit organization or the private sector. The governmental entity must represent a municipality with an adopted comprehensive plan that has been determined to be consistent with the Act; or
- ◆ Quasi-governmental agency. Examples might be a regional council, a soil and water conservation district, a school district, or a comprehensive transportation study region and must be partnered with a municipality that has an adopted comprehensive plan that has been determined to be consistent with the Act actively engaged in the project.

Please visit the FAQ web page that will be posted at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/landuse/docs/grantfaq.pdf> by March 14, 2003. Any necessary clarifications regarding the grant will be addressed on the FAQ web page.

CONTACT

For more information, contact Fred Landa at SPO at (287-3860 or 800-662-4545, or fred.landa@maine.gov).

STATE BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

A final word of caution: Although this grant round factored in cuts in the agency's budget as of the end of January 2003, there is no guarantee that additional cuts will not be forthcoming. Budgetary actions of the new administration and Legislature could potentially impact funding of the grant program for this and future grant rounds. Unfortunately, such uncertainty may factor into a community's decision about whether or not to dedicate the time and effort involved in applying for these funds. It is SPO's sincere hope to offer the grant programs at the anticipated levels. We feel it is prudent to move ahead to offer grants, which provide valuable assistance to ongoing planning efforts, but feel compelled to remind communities, as they consider the time and effort involved in applying for these funds, that there is an element of risk and uncertainty that has not necessarily been a factor in previous grant rounds.